BNL Community Summer Science Program: Mount Sinai HS Student Studies at the NSLS

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Despite evidence on walls and mirrors to the contrary, children's fingerprints can disappear faster than those of adults. This little-known fact can hamper investigations of kidnapping cases, which have been so prevalent in the news this summer.

But, this summer, this mystery has been studied at BNL: Lara Hershcovitch, who will be a senior at Mount Sinai High School this September, is using an infrared microscope at the National Synchrotron Light Source (NSLS) in an experiment to determine why adults' fingerprints can last longer on objects than children's prints do.

Hershcovitch is a participant in BNL's Community Summer Science Program, managed by the Lab's Office of Educational Programs (OEP) and funded by Brookhaven Science Associates.

Through this program, 26 high school students have been spending six weeks at BNL this summer in hands-on workshops or, as is Hershcovitch, in a research internship. All students also attend morning lectures on various scientific fields.

In her experiment, Hershcovitch is using the infrared microscope to study fingerprints from fathers and

their sons ages 5-8, to determine the differences in the prints' chemical composition. Her data analysis may eventually be published in a scientific journal, and it could lead to more effective forensic investigations.

- Diane Greenberg

[Editor's note: Reprinted with permission from the BNL Bulletin - August 16, 2002.]

Working on the fingerprinting project together are: (from right) Lara Hershcovitch; Lisa Miller, a National Synchrotron Light Source (NSLS) Department scientist who volunteered to mentor Hershcovitch; and Jackie Tetenbaum, an NSLS guest technical collaborator who, as an undergraduate, participated at the Lab in the Energy Research Undergraduate Fellowship, another student program run by BNL's Office of Educational Programs.